

ISAIAH LANSON'S  
STATEMENT AND INQUIRY,

CONCERNING THE TRIAL OF

WILLIAM LANSON,

BEFORE THE NEW HAVEN COUNTY COURT, NOVEMBER SESSION, 1845.



## STATEMENT, &c.

*"Come, let us reason together."*

I AM requested by Mr. WILLIAM LANSON to give a short statement of his management for the last nine months.

I shall refer the public to a list of names to corroborate the statements I shall make concerning the character of Mr. W. Lanson's house. That he did not keep a house of the character imputed to him, his friends and relatives know. But it is hard to convince a prejudiced public. I am not at all in the habit of writing for the public eye, and, perhaps my story, unpolished by any rhetorical flourish, and in many cases, no doubt, violating the rules of syntax, may not grace his cause; but such as it is I give it—"a round unvarnished tale," "nothing extenuated." Let the public decide.

In order to have it understood, I shall have to commence back to 1842. At this period he was keeping house on the corner of East and Greene streets, west side of the railroad. His family consisted of himself and wife, and his brother Laban Lanson, and Mr. Kinney, who were all the inmates of the house. The house was always closed by 9 o'clock, and his business was tending a store of his in the basement of the Liberian Hotel. He was called before Squire Bennett about this time, and a few witnesses from Barnsville were called on the part of the State; and he had for himself Laban Lanson and Mr. Kinney, who had boarded in his house for a long time, to testify to its good character; but the hearsay evidence prevailed, and he had to procure bonds and pay about \$12 costs.

His wife and L. Lanson would not live in an indicted house, and Mr. L. came to board with me; and Mrs. Lanson, I believe, went to board with her sister's husband. Mr. Lanson got some one to take the house who made it agreeable to the name; did not have many people there, but accommodated those that came, and whenever he was invited before Squire Bennett, he always satisfied the court; but he was called so often he found they wanted more than he could get; and sometime last winter he (Lanson) made an oath in such a



manner that he never will break it, and it was, never to keep a house to accommodate single men and women, after the first day of April last past, which he declares he positively has not. He is a man that is very easy and very charitable, and has always let low characters impose upon him. He had four sick persons who have dropped in there because they could find no other place, and he carried them through their sickness, for which he should have received two hundred dollars, but has never received five; two of them have since died.

He moved in May last to No. 14 Fleet street, with his wife and Eliza Gamson. Soon after Sarah Corbin came in one evening about 9 o'clock, quite sick,—he being a man so charitable, gave her some refreshment and put her to bed. She stayed at his house nine weeks; he furnishing her medicine; and when she was able to travel paid her stage fare to Guilford, where she belonged. The next day came a woman by the name of Sarah Strong, who had been living with Mrs. Dade, who keeps a boarding house; but she was unable to work, and she wanted to stay a few days, and she would get some money of Mrs. Dade and pay her board. She was at his house about three months, during which time she was able to be about some part of the time. She never paid him but 75 cents.

The house is about 40 feet long, and 18 feet wide—three rooms below, and the chambers are parted about half way with boards, and he used to hang up a blanket between, about twelve feet from the front. They had two boarders in the front chamber and five in the back chamber. The two sick people who were there in May and June were in the big chamber, and himself, wife and two girls in the front chamber. There was no room for such business as he is charged with, if he had wanted to have carried it on. *Eliza Gamson* came there to work, but she was very unsteady and did not stay but about one month, but she has been there about a quarter of the time since. *Lucy Rhodes* has been in his family since she was nine years old, and has been there about half the time this season, not more. These two girls are a little rude, some part of the time. I believe some one hired him to keep Mrs. Burton about two months, but she is very still, and the one that stayed only about three weeks are all the young women that have been at his house, except comers and goers. He used to keep things to sell below similar to the dance-houses, and Mr. Lines' shop entertained the same kind of company the other four places did, only not so many, but he had all the sick ones because the other places would not keep them.

He calculated when he moved to this house to deal in clothing; but he took four men boarders, who expected to go to sea in about ten days; but they disappeared before their time and stole considerable clothing from his store. The loss of clothing was about 50 dollars, which with his constant tax of sick persons upon his hands, he concluded to change his course. Accordingly he opened a liquor store, and conducted his business as a dozen more traders in the same street at the same time. In June, Mrs. Sage came there, who had some money, and she was anxious to treat all in the house. She also wanted a dress done up, and offered to pay 75 cents. She wanted to become a day boarder, and offered Mr. Lanson 50 cents per day for board, saying she had a room in Grand street, where she took her lodgings, and he consented to take her. She was there about 20 days, but not one night. His wife was not very well, and he got Lucy Rhodes to come and assist him about his clothing; but she was young, and Eliza Gamson was rather rude. A Mrs. Cassay hired the garret, in the east end, on account of her three children, and he got her to take care of the cooking, washing, &c. This is all the family he had, excepting Kinsey Warner, and wife, up to the time of the first prosecution, when Esq. Bennett's ears were saluted with so many great stories; and as things appeared before him, he could do no less than put him under bonds, and he must be excused. From that time up to the time of his trial, he has kept some little things to sell in his store.

He gave me the names of all that have stayed at his house over two days, the whole season. *Sarah Strong* was not sick a-bed but about half the time, and she worked some for me; she is now at Mrs. Dade's. I shall give all the names, and if any one calls on them, I want them to tell first the way he managed his house, for my satisfaction, and the satisfaction of others. He says there never were twenty in his house at once, and do you ask if they knew any one who had to pay for twenty drinks at one time.

The following are the names referred to, with the time of their sojourn at his house prefixed.

<i>Sarah Strong</i> was there	95 days.
<i>Sarah Corbin</i> ,	65 "
<i>Nancy Livingston</i> , (died)	35 "
<i>Susan Muns</i> , (died)	155 "
<i>Mary Hamilton</i> ,	20 "
<i>Lucy Rhodes</i> , (in all)	95 "
<i>Eliza Gamson</i> , (in all)	98 "
<i>Mrs. Sage</i> , (days only)	20 "



G. Burton	60	days.
Mrs. Warner, (married)	21	"
Mrs. A. Peck,	15	"
Kinney Warner, (married)	38	"
Mr. Bishop,	30	"
Wm. C. Cassay,	138	"
Andrew Cassay,	20	"
Andrew Wilson,	4	"
Samuel Freeman,	10	"
Ebenezer Johnson,	35	"
Archibald Leshmen,	50	"
Oliver Beach,	60	"
George Williams,	42	"
Israel Peck, (nights)	20	"
Thomas Head,	35	"
George Hollister,	42	"
Jackson Cornwell,	30	"
Charles Warren,	42	"
Mrs Cassay had the back chamber for her- self and two children, altogether	60	"
Mrs. Hilly and two children	20	"
Mrs. Phillips,	40	"

There were five beds in the big chamber. Some one or more have been sick in this chamber nearly all the time. The two who were sick there last, both died. One of these sick persons he was obliged to carry up and down stairs. Capt. Beecher was requested to take her, but he would not. Lanson done as well by her as he could.

Now I will tell you what he has not done;—he has not had the custom which four or five houses in his neighborhood have had, although the custom was the same kind, except in sickness.

Now I ask the public what Mr. Wm. Lanson is in jail for? and when I ask the public, it includes both judge and jury. Is it because it is supposed he kept the Liberian Hotel? It is not so; for that has been kept for the last eight years by Charles Coe and James Nanton; they are in town to answer for themselves. If it is on account of the small house on the corner of East and Greene streets, that the public would make an indicted house, they have called him to an account pretty often, and he always acknowledged facts, and gave them ample satisfaction, both in bonds and money, faster than he received it—so it cannot be for that. Can it be on account of the lies that have been told about him the past seven months, and published in the papers, about having offered inducements to draw the boys and girls to his house, such

persons as have been named, card-playing, fiddling, &c., which he never has had a bit of? Then there is the lie the person told in the grave yard, and two more stories just as bad, which I thought I would not mention at present. I did not know but those stories might raise prejudice enough to have sent him there. Or could it be the State's witnesses. One stated he heard a great quarrel, and this witness said Mr. Lanson was trying to get a woman out of doors. That was Mrs. Nanton. No one had quarreled with her. One morning he said he saw a woman at the window, with her neck bare most down to her breast. And other witnesses said they had seen men and women go in there night and day. And that would not be very strange, as he kept liquors, beer, and cigars to sell, the same as Mr. Lines and the dance-house, and several other places. There was a lady witness saw some one kissed in his public room, through a board window shutter about ten o'clock at night. Another witness said he had seen throngs of people come by the back way, and go in at the back door.

He was asked when this happened; and he said it was all the time—ever since he (Lanson) had been at that house,—every day, up to that time; and of all these throngs of people Mr. Lanson said he had men who came from sea and others offer to pay for what liquor the whole company might call for, and he never knew of eighteen drinking at his bar at one time. There are some gentlemen whose names I do not wish to call, have treated all in the house as many as fifty times each, in the course of the season, and they will say under oath they never treated seventeen people at one time, and they can tell you whether he accommodated single men and women to sleep together, and if these few will not satisfy you, call on any of the rest on the list. You can go to James Nanton's, or Charles Coe's, or Frazier's dance hall any evening, and likely count from twenty to fifty people,—and what has Mr. Lanson done so much worse than others? He has been made to pay two fines for selling liquors within six months, which cost him about \$25, and he ought to have \$175 for keeping sick people within the last eight months.

I forgot to mention that Sage got up and lied so; and what she did say did not amount to any thing. She said she heard Mr. Lanson make a bargain with Mandy Pruns and Jackson to board with William Lanson, and sleep together for one dollar and fifty cents per week; but as well as she could lie, she did not say she had seen them in bed together,—so that lie amounted to nothing.

I hope this report will go as far east and west as wind and water can carry it.



Being informed by the State's attorney that facts were to be proved, and that no case could be made without them, Mr. Lanson felt secure, knowing his innocence. His lawyer also recommended his case as a clear one. I should like to inquire whether adultery can be proved by neighbors standing on the outside of a house, in the night, and the house not lighted? If so; Mr. Lanson's judgment is a correct one, for it comes under this head; and if not, then he is unrighteously sentenced, and should be released.

Mr. Lanson is an old inhabitant; he has worked in this town about thirty-eight years; he built nearly all the East Haven bridge and the steamboat wharf, with his own hands; and also the long wharf, which he built, when there was no way of getting to the pier without going in boats. Mr. Lanson's earnings on that wharf amounted to about \$25,000; there is also the basin wharf, with two walls, six feet thick, and one thousand feet long. These and a great many other pieces of workmanship which he has mastered, show him to be an industrious and hard-working citizen. He has been the owner of two livery stables that consisted of 40 livery horses, and carriages and harnesses answerable. He has clothed and fed more poor people from his own pocket than any other man in his day, with the same means. Men, without a cent of their own, have come to him to borrow money, (and he was glad to see them,) when all others had refused them aid, and he always let them have what they asked for. There were white men of some notoriety in the city who can testify that they have borrowed from \$25 to \$100 at a time of him, when they were in want. I mention these facts to show that Mr. Lanson was very humane. I know of a family of colored people, the husband having been dead for a long time, who had one child, and for a number of years were as poor as poor could be, and he used to furnish every thing they wanted; I should think he had given them one hundred dollar's worth. The woman, through his assistance, is now very well off and a very good woman. She does not want to see him now; but he is just as good now as he was then.

Mr. William Lanson is a different man from what he is considered to be. There are mistakes which are going about for truth; but I hope they will die away after a while. I suppose the name of the Liberian might have affected his case some, it has always had such a bad name. Some years ago Mr. William H. Elliott lost about sixty dollars out of his store, and he sent word to Mr. Lanson, describing the man. The man was discovered by Mr. L. and he watched him, and as he was about leaving in the steamboat, he search-

ed him and found about fifty dollars on his person, and he sent word to Mr. Elliott who came at once with an officer. Mr. James Nanton and Charles Coe have kept the hotel for the last eight years; but if any thing was stolen or secreted, that came to the knowledge of any officer, he always informed the officer at once, and he is just the same to this day.

There were some observations made about all the witnesses that testified at the court house, living at his house; but I will assure any person that there was only one that lived there, or had for some time; and that was an old man. They had all lived there in the course of the season. Mr. Knevals and other gentlemen were requested for their own satisfaction, to call at the house of Mr. Lanson at any hour in the night they pleased, and at any time, and if they were refused admittance to any and all parts of his house, he was to forfeit ten dollars. This was before the first oath.

We, his relatives, want to know what Mr. Lanson is in jail for? Has he violated the law—no; unless his house may be called a house of bad character, merely because suspicious folks came into his house. I think there are places about his premises that keep two women to his one, and would be glad of more; but they would not want so many sick ones as he had to carry up stairs and down. I suppose this is what he went to jail for, and I should not wonder if some gentlemen hired them into their houses to take part of the burthen off their wives. They appear to be a very necessary evil, all things considered. We read that there was nothing made in vain. But what did Mr. Lanson go to jail for? Did he allow fiddling and dancing and card-playing—no, he never has had a bit of it in his house. Did he allow quarreling and fighting—making a noise and rallying the neighbors? No, he never allowed quarreling or fighting. If they were boisterous, or sung, or made any unnecessary noise at all, he was sure to chide them. There never has been one fight in his house—I mean the house Mr. Lanson kept the past summer. Mrs. Nanton came in there one day, and began to talk to Lucy, but she would not answer her; she made some unusual noise and rallied some of the neighbors. Mr. Whittelsey came to the house, with some others, and Mr. Lanson had been trying to hush her, before any of them came; so Nanton took her home, but it all did not last fifteen minutes.

I have been acquainted with almost all of the justices from Esq. H. Daggett down to Esq. Bennett, and have had more or less business with most of them in some way, for many years. The common class of people, when they wanted help, used to call upon him, and since that time, he has had



as much as he wanted to do to help himself; but I have got a great many credits for Esq. Bennett; he has generally been very accommodating, in all dealings. Mr. Lanson has been in his power a good many times, and I believe he never sued him, or made him a cent of cost, and I must say, that when he bound Wm. Lanson over to the County Court, that he did his duty, for he had heard so many hard stories, that I should have thought that if he had not bound him over, under full as much bonds as he did, he would not have been doing justice to the State. There was a case came before the Esq. about three years ago, that Mr. Lanson was dissatisfied about, because he had two witnesses that could not have been mistaken, and they were flung by and the case was decided on hear-say evidence, when Mr. Lanson knew it was wrong; but all that is past.

One word about a gentleman in this town that I have had deal with, who has been censured by some—it is Esq. N. WHEELER, when he used to act in his official capacity. I never saw a man that appeared to feel more for a poor man that was in trouble, and was not able to help himself. I have seen him contrive many ways to keep a person from going to jail, and promptly take some old things that he must have lost by; but he had that humane feeling in him.

A few words for Mr. Lanson. When he went before the Court he felt as safe as if he had been at meeting; for, some months before this he was in conversation with Mr. Hollister, who brought the suit, and he told him that his case came under the new law, where they must prove facts;—that is, that he furnished lodgings for unmarried men and women, and that to certain knowledge, or the case must fail. At another time he was at the State Attorney's office, and in conversation with him; he said he must do his duty; but this case was headed under the new law, and unless he could prove the same as in case of adultery, he had got no case. Thus he got, in conversation with the opposite party, his two lawyers, and the surety of as many witnesses as he pleased out of thirty, that knew the house as well as Lanson knew it himself. Some of them were white men, who requested him not to use their names, but would have been glad to have given him from thirty to fifty dollars each, who will come forward and say that they never have paid him one cent, and say they know he did not permit that done in his house, and who have heard him say he never would permit it, since the first day of April last. In my opinion that man is very much wronged by the Hon. Judge of the County Court. He was sentenced to hard labor, and then taxed one

hundred dollars, being the extent of punishment for the crime committed and pursued on the most aggravated terms under the new law.

I hope all who feel an interest in the welfare of the human race will spend a few moments to look at the way in which Mr. Lanson is situated. He makes himself as comfortable as possible. The keeper is a real gentleman, and he does by his prisoners, as nearly as he can, as he would wish to be done by. Mr. Lanson says he never has been better taken care of since he was a child in his mother's arms, than he has been since he has been in that prison. His lodgings are comfortable; he is kept clean; his food he gets three times a day regularly warm and good—and enough for a King. The keeper is not one of that sort of men who wants to cabbage two or three cents out of each man's allowance, and I think so far as I can judge, the whole family are like him. My opinion, perhaps, is not worth recording; but I do think that there is no sin in the sight of God so odious, as for those who have it in their power to impose upon a poor prisoner, or a poor man in any way. If a man is not of a charitable and humane spirit, he is not a proper man in public. Notwithstanding Mr. Wm. Lanson has been before the Hon. County Court, and found guilty by the jury, and sentenced to jail six months, to hard labor, he is a man that has done a great deal of business in this town, and has a very extensive acquaintance, and there are a great many dissatisfied with some of the proceedings; they generally think there must have been some misunderstanding; and to give some satisfaction to those that feel an interest in him I called upon a number who have been acquainted with the management of his house. He is naturally easy and very charitable, and very liable to be imposed on some; but we do not think that he meant to have any body imposed upon, or to disturb any body's feelings in the least. We find that there has been two young women with him about half the season, who sometimes are a little rude; but he has never had a fight about his house; he has never allowed any unmarried men and women to sleep together; he never has allowed any card-playing or fiddling; and any unnecessary noise he readily and promptly checked. Most of the State's witnesses agreed that they had often heard him chastise them, and one has reason to believe that no harm was intended on his part, and all these things we wish to have taken into consideration, and if any thing can be done in his favor it would be received very thankfully by many in this town, and many out of town. When we average the sick people



he has taken care of for nothing, it will amount to about two months for one person, besides two deaths, he has attended to. These persons were so sick they were unable to help themselves. Setting aside these, he has only about eight in his family, boarders and all, and the coming and going lodgers would not be more than one a day. Several of the persons called on say they do not think there has ever been twenty persons in his house at one time. This house has not been so great a nuisance, as it has been made out to be at the court house. One witness made a long story about a great noise that rallied the neighbors, and he went to see about it, and found Mr. Lanson trying to get Mrs. Nanton out of the door, and she was talking very loud about something that she thought took place about two years ago; but nobody else made the least disturbance, which was about three months since;—the witness referred to that which is all that could be said about fighting. I can bring ten or twelve witnesses who cannot be impeached, to testify under oath, to every statement I have made. He has done a little trading, just enough to keep along, and I should think he ought to have as much privilege as any other man in the city. He has been prosecuted twice this season, which cost him about \$25. This is the pay he gets for his charity. But I think it will all come right; for it is said, "He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord," and so I think he is pretty well off yet. He takes every thing fair, and I hope he may see good days in this world and in the world to come. He is in jail, to be sure; but if any man in the city can show that he has done the least thing more than is customary in the neighborhood, that has gone unnoticed, I want him to convince me.

The following conversation took place between myself and another gentleman, which I give to show what strangers and others thought of Mr. Wm. Lanson:—

"Good morning, sir; ain't your name Lanson?"

"Yes, sir, that's my name."

"Is your father's name William Lanson?"

"Yes."

"I heard in New York that the County Court had got him in jail for keeping a house of ill-fame,—under the new law. Facts must be proved, the same as in adultery, or the prisoner must go free. I used to board with the old man about twelve years ago. He had a little woman for a house-keeper; he lived down by the Liberian Hotel; my name is Joseph Tiffany; they used to call me Joe T.; you ask your father about Joe T. I hail from 'Down East,' of Boston; I

have been to sea since I was 27 years old; I got cast away, down east; I believe there were only two saved; I got on board a lumberman bound for New Haven; I hadn't a thing but what I had on. I heard the Liberian was a place where sailors went; I went down there; I had been wet so much I was sick, and had a fever then; when I got there it was all full, and I found your father, and he took me to his house; I stayed there about forty days. If I had been the old man's son, he never could have done more for me than he did do. I had a doctor about ten days and grew worse every day—the doctor gave me up; but your father put about half a hundred roasted onions all over my body,—sweat me with herbs—put my feet into warm water—put ashes into the water, and drafts on my feet—and steamed me with hot herbs, about twelve hours, and that broke up the fever. I got better in a few days. I think I should have died if I had not fell in with him; he was the most noble-hearted man I ever saw; he was so kind to every body and had no pride. Where can you find another man of his property taking notice of such a poor sailor as I was? I have seen him leave his meals to talk with some poor person with two or three ragged children, and contrive to make a home for them; put clothes on the children and give them something to eat. I used to tell him, you never will get anything,—and he would say I cannot bear to see them suffer. At that time, I suppose he was worth \$20,000. He rented houses up town to twenty small families, and he had a house about the hotel for five families more; then he had a good store in the basement of the hotel, and he had a large barn, livery stable, eight or ten horses, and all kinds of carriages, and he told me he put \$1000 worth of furniture in his hotel. I never saw any body come there but that owed him. He must have been in law, or somebody has taken undue advantage of him some way to have got him down.

"He is just so now; he has taken care of sick persons for which he ought to have two hundred dollars, this season; two of them died at this house, and he has not received five dollars; but that is his make; he cannot help it."

"I boarded with him at different times about one year. I think he used to accommodate and give to the poor more than any two men I ever saw. My father was somewhat like him, but not half so generous. My father was a lawyer. When I left home he had been justice of the peace. I used to know something about law. Now the two that told me, who heard the trial, said they never proved anything against him. To make out a case, there must be two good, unim-



reached witnesses, to see a man and woman undress, and that Mr. Lanson approved of it, and knew it; but in his case there was but one who had ever been in the house, and that was the constable; and he said he had been in the house, and been up stairs at almost all hours of the night, but he had never seen a man and woman in bed together; and further than that, he told the court that three of your father's witnesses stood as fair as witnesses in general. What he knew, and the officer is as apt to know, if any body, they said, Mr. Lanson had two fine lodgers; they had about thirteen witnesses on their part, and they all testified that they had heard Mr. Lanson say that he had taken his oath never to permit unmarried men and women to sleep together since last April, and they knew he had never broken his oath. I heard there was a girl got up and lied there; my informants said it was considered so throughout the house. She did not say she had seen any men and women in bed together. The two lawyers stated the case very handsomely, I am told, so much so that it was enough to convince any person in the house, and he thought there were about five hundred."

"Well, I was there; and I think that was the case." "These two men told us, the State's Attorney did not come so near proving this case as the tornado storm did blowing up the city. And you that turn your backs upon such a piece of injustice as this appears to be, and keep such a good old man in jail,—after doing so much as he has done in this town for the last forty years,—I should not wonder if you were visited with another wind storm that might prove to a good many of you fatal. I never knew a man whose name was "none so fair" as his, and this affair is talked of in New-York a good deal, and considered one of the most inhuman cases ever heard of. I came up to see him, but I cannot bear to go there. I will leave you ten dollars for him. This is from Joseph T. that he doctored with onions, about thirteen years ago, and tell him he is welcome. I shall expect to be here about next June, and I have got some money left yet. I have been first mate in one ship about 11 years, and the last 7 years my wages have been \$42 per month. I am not very wild, and your father shall not starve, so long as I can help it. For what I knew of him and heard of him the past season, I consider him one of the best hearted men there is in the world. I think he has complaints for his imprisonments, although I am told he is much pleased with his keeper. He thinks he performs his duty with humanity and kindness, and that is a great satisfaction to me, if I am a white man. My father never bound a man over, unless the proof was very

decisive against the prisoner. I remember there was a man had a house and barn insured, and there were two day laborers which he did not like very well; the man that owned the house and barn lost them by fire, and he had the two laborers arrested; but the proof against them was not satisfactory to my father, and he did not bind them over. A few days subsequent, a man came forward and acknowledged that the owner of the buildings himself hired him to set fire to his premises, and gave him \$50. The consequence was that he was taken up, put under \$25,000 bonds, and he and his friends paid the amount. Tell your father so long as Joseph T. has his health he shall not want."

I have said and proved by other testimony than my own, that Mr. Lanson is a benevolent, charitable and feeling man;—the fact of his taking care of the sick persons referred to, paying the funeral expenses, &c., without the prospect of compensation, proves this. But Mr. Lanson is also poor; he has trusted people to his disadvantage, until his resources are drained. Bad debts and accidents have ruined him. At one time a young lad burnt papers, by accident, to the amount of nearly \$20,000. He has lost by paying the fines of persons who were sentenced to jail; and in almost every way, he has been victimized. But if he gets clear of this, and does away with his excess of charity, he will get along better than he has done for the last ten years. He is sentenced to jail for six months, and to pay a fine of \$100.

I wish to be understood that Mr. Lanson's jailor is perfect in attending to all the calls of a jailor. He has been there about forty days, and he has not seen the sun or moon; he has been locked into his cell by 5 o'clock, P. M., and unlocked at 6 o'clock, A. M.; his meals are always warm, and good, and plenty. I do not think there is a man in prison who would willingly violate his rules; he never has been an inmate of that prison before; I do not know but the prison has always been managed as well, before, for I have not had so good a chance to know as since Mr. Lanson has been there.

I would say, by the request of Mr. Lanson, (who is a man who has seen considerable of the world, being now about 64 years old,) that he never saw persons treated with more humanity than they are by the jailor and his family; and he hopes that so long as this man can keep this house he may keep it, and that his opposers may be very scarce.

I suppose of course the judge and jury knew the nature of an oath as well as I do; of the judge I have nothing to say.



I must leave his decision to the public. I hope I have said nothing for any one to take offense at, for I feel friendly, and I want the friendship of every human being in the community; I should be very sorry to offend any one.

I want to make a sort of comparison, some way, but I do not really know how to come at it.—We'll say there is a new law passed in 1845, that, if any person is found guilty of putting to death a certain animal of a certain kind, his penalty shall be a fine of \$500 and two years imprisonment in the common jail, at hard labor. Now, we will suppose Mr. A. has been seen chasing one of these animals, (which are very numerous about the city,) several times with a club, but never had been seen to beat or injure one of them. After a while Mr. A. is invited by a warrant before some justice of the peace, with several witnesses on the part of the State, who all swear that they have seen Mr. A. chase these animals at different times. And one lady swears she had looked through her board shutters and seen the prisoner with one of the animals in his arms going towards the water, she opened her window, but did not see him come back.—Then Mr. A.'s witnesses came forward and swore they had seen this kind of animal at A's house, but had always seen him treat them very kind; and had seen him feed them; and one had heard Mr. A. say he would not hurt one on any account,—but the justice thought he had probable cause to bind A. over, as there was proof that he had chased the animal with a club, which he did. Bonds given, and when court set witnesses were ready; all testified they had seen Mr. A. chase the animal. But, asks the lawyer, did you ever see him throw any thing?—two said they had seen him strike at them, but did not hit them. But the lady swore she had been with the animals, and heard Mr. A. tell Mr. B. if he would help him catch two of them by ten o'clock that night, he would give him 8 cents. But Mr. A.'s witnesses testified as before, that they had seen Mr. A. act very kind to them. The testimony concluded, evidence summed up by the counsel, and the case appeared clearly in the favor of A.; but by some means, the judge found him guilty—he is sentenced to pay \$300 and costs, and be imprisoned two years. This is pretty hard; especially as it has not been proved that Mr. A. had killed one of the animals.

Now this is the exact position Mr. Lanson is in. No witness has testified that he saw any criminal intercourse in his house. Not one swore that they had seen any thing which should convict Mr. Lanson. Nothing positive was proved; but circumstances were alone taken as proof. Were it not

that the penalty was so severe, his relations probably would submit to it without raising a murmur. But while Mr. L. is forced to comply with the demands of the law, they ask the public to have charity enough at least to judge for themselves. If Mr. L. had been a white man, he would have had at least some advantages which he has not had. Some evidence of his would have been taken as good. His proof of innocence was clear enough in our minds. We have no hesitation in saying that the jury were in a measure prejudiced; and no doubt the whole community in common with them, from the fact that he was owner of the Liberian hotel—but it should be recollected he was not the occupant or conductor of the establishment, although it was a very common remark to signalize the Liberian as "Lanson's," for this, he has had to pay many fines—been the subject of common notoriety—and taken the blunt of the curses which the community were disposed to heap upon some one, and him for want of a better person. His character has been rated below its value, even in his own town, and he held up to public scorn for the faults of others.

Is there any proof in the whole of the testimony given by the State strong enough to convict a man of so serious a charge as this? We think not. He is not convicted of even keeping a *disorderly* house. No one said they saw or heard fighting on his premises; much less that he kept a house of ill-fame. It seems to us that prejudice was the strongest testimony against him. False representations were made by persons, who testified in behalf of the State, either from wilful sin or ignorant blindness, which operated very much against him.

As allusion has been made to one or two stories in circulation in the body of this, I will, before closing, give an extract which was published in one of the New Haven papers, before this trial came on. In the fore part of September, Mr. Lanson went into the country, and left his house in the care of a man and woman that were acquainted with his business. There were two women came to his house while he was absent; and when he returned one of these persons were very sick indeed. He sent and procured a doctor and medicine, with his own money. Every attention was paid her that could be, but she died the third day in the arms of his house keeper. An Episcopal minister, Mr. Stoakes, attended the funeral. Every thing went on orderly as could be expected. I think there were three coaches; and it appeared to be a very respectable funeral. It being on Sunday a great many people attended. After the corpse was put into the ground, Mr. Stoakes turned to the people



who were listening, and made some very strong animadversions on the house. Mr. Lanson contradicted the statement in the papers at the time, which I shall copy here, as his own defense, published at the time:—

"In consequence of a publication recently made concerning a funeral at his house, the subscriber feels called upon to make a brief statement of the facts in the case. On my return from a temporary absence, about the middle of September last, [1845,] I found at my house two sick colored women, who had come there without my knowledge; but they were so sick that I considered it would be an act of inhumanity to turn them into the street, without protection or shelter. One of them died the next day but one after I got home. Every preparation was made for a decent burial, that could be made under the circumstances, and the Rev. Mr. Stokes, a colored clergyman, an entire stranger to me, was called upon to attend the funeral. He came, and the services at the house were gone through with much solemnity; but after the corpse had been placed in the ground, to my surprise, the attending clergyman commenced a tirade of abuse and censure upon me and my house, in words similar to the following; "In all my ministry, I never saw such an awful hell-hole, and heard such cursing and swearing, as was heard and seen at the place where this corpse was brought from." Now, I have the names of 14 respectable witnesses who were present, whom I can refer to, and I am not afraid to appeal to the sexton himself, to say that a more quiet, orderly, and decent funeral, they never attended. Such being the facts, I ask what will the public think of this reverend darkey, who thus degrades his sacred calling by heaping the foulest slanders upon one of his own color, at a time when he could offer no explanation or defense. I can prove, by 20 respectable witnesses, that the statement above alluded to was wholly gratuitous and unfounded. I leave every candid and unprejudiced mind to judge between us.

WILLIAM LANSON."

Enough has been given to show all that is necessary to convince any reasonable man of Mr. Lanson's innocence. If I were to quote from his life as it is known to me, I should both tire your patience and waste my time. I shall simply say—if what is contained in these few pages should seem harsh or unpleasant to any person I hope they will not impute it to a disposition on my part to be offensive. I have told the story in as simple and plain manner as I could, without any disposition to wound the feelings or question the honesty of motive in any one. I leave the facts with the public, for whom I have regard.

ISAIAH LANSON.